

## **Colelia Christmas Pageant (CD)** **“Colelia Christkindl Besuch”**

### **Introduction**

On Friday, January 9, 1998, we had a small informal “Colelia Reunion”. It took place at the home of Magdalena [Aspeleiter] Marquardt in White Rock, BC.

Present were:

Magdalena, her mother Theresia [Lauber] Aspeleiter, Ambros and his wife Egena [Drescher] Heidrich, my mother Agatha [Janer] Tuchscherer, and I, Josef Tuchscherer. All of us were born in Colelia, in the Romanian province of Dobrudscha. Also present was my cousin Raimund Tuchscherer, son of Colelia-born Josef and Martha [Janer] Tuchscherer. Raimund was born in Germany.

Mom, Theresia, Ambros and Egena, now in their seventies and eighties, were some of the last adults to live in Colelia at the time of the resettlement (“Umsiedlung”) of the approximately seventy Colelia families to Germany, on November 20, 1940.

I asked these Coleliers to recall the traditional Christmas Eve visit by the gift-giving “Christkindl” (Christ Child, the modern equivalent of Santa Claus) to most Colelia families. The young players of the pageant included the Christkindl, played by a girl dressed in a white gown, her head covered with a veil, the Virgin Mary, Joseph, a doll representing the Baby Jesus, a couple of angels and shepherds, and the feared Belzebub”.

The audio recording includes the spoken and sung parts of the short play performed during each home visit. The last part of the recording is a description of the Colelia New Year’s tradition.

This recording is historically significant. It would be the last gathering of Coleliers of their age group, likely not only here in Canada but also in Germany. The dialect spoken was our “Swabian German”, as spoken at home in Colelia and transmitted from generation to generation since our ancestors’ emigration from Alsace-Lorraine, Germany, to southern Russia in the early 1800’s. This pageant, too, is part of the culture transmitted from that time.

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### **The Christmas Eve Pageant**

Theresia (the principal speaker of this gathering):

The players would step to the window of the home and ask:

“May the Christkindl enter?”

Once in the living room, the players gathered around the manger containing the Baby Jesus and introduced themselves:

“Guten Abend, guten Abend	Good evening
Wir bringen Grüße vom hohen Himmel.	We bring greetings from heaven above.
Wir sind von einer guten Lehr.	We come with good tidings
Gute Lehr seids (viel)	Good tidings there are many
Weil’s Christkindl mitbringen und sagen will”.	Which the Christkindl wants to bring and announce.

The players then continued in song:

“Christkindl tret herein	Christkindl enter
Mit aller Freid	Joyfully
Mit Gespräch allein	With your tidings.
Und Josef und Maria rein.	And with Josef and Mary.
Kniet euch nieder zu euerem Jesulein.”	Kneel down by Jesus.

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All the players would kneel and speak in rhyme:

Mary:

„Heiliger Josef mein’,	Saint Josef, mine,
Sagt die Heilige Jungfrau rein.	The Virgin Mary pleads.
‘Hilf mir wiegen mein Kindelein’.	Help me rock my child’s cradle.

Josef:

„Wie soll ich dein Kindelein wiegen?	How can I rock the baby?
Ich kann dein Kindelein nicht wiegen.	I cannot rock the baby,
Ich kann selbst mein alter, steifer Buckel	I can hardly bend my old, stiff back.
Nicht biegen.	
Ich bin von “hei und von bei”“.	I am from “hei and from bei”“.

In unison all the players sang:

“Lasset uns das Kindelein wiegen.	Let us rock the Child.
Mein Herz soll’s Kindelein wiegen.	My heart shall rock the Child.
Oh, Jesulein süß.	Oh, sweet little Jesus,
Oh, Jesulein süß.	Oh, sweet little Jesus.

The Christkindl then distributed the presents to the children, but before she did she asked the children:

“Böse Bube,	Mischivous boys
Böse Madle,	Mischivous girls.
Könn’t r bede?”	Can you pray?

The children came forward and recited their prayers. The Christkindl then handed them their presents (which the parents had handed to the players upon entry, out of sight of the children). The players then continued, singing:

“Auf, auf, ihr Hirten,	Get up, you shepherds
Thr schlafet zu lang.	You sleep too long.
Die Nacht ist vergangen	The night has past
Jetzt scheint die Sonn.	The sun is shining.
Die Gesellschaft, die Musik,	The company, the music,
Ein wunderschn Kind.	A wondrous Child.
Ein Kindlein klein,	A child so small,
Ein Kindlein klein.	A child so small.
Der unser Erléser geboren soll sein.	Which is born to us as our saviour.
Der Storer (?) wohl mit stiller Stimm	The ... sings in a soft voice
Der Winzer wollt noch weiter hin.	The vintner wants to move on.
Von jedem Ort nach Bethlehem.	From every town to Bethlehem.
Dort wo ja das Kindlein geboren soll sein.”	Where the Child was presumably born.

The players then departed with the song:

„Jetzt treten wir alle zur Tiire hinaus	Now we shall depart through the door
Und nehmen das UnglÜck mit heraus.	And take with us all misfortune.
Oh, Jesulein süß	Oh, sweet little Jesus
Oh, Jesulein süß.	Oh, sweet little Jesus.

Once the players had left, one heard a frightening rattling of chains from outside: Belzebub was coming! The children were in terror at the sight of the fur-covered monstrous figure, which would dispense disciplinary punishment to any child, which had misbehaved during the year.

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With the departure of Belzebub the visiting Christmas Pageant was concluded. The children could now relax and enjoy the treats and toys received from the Christkindl.

### **Colelia New Year's Customs**

Married adults had no special formal traditions. They would visit relatives and friends in the afternoon while enjoying food and drink and often break into song. One traditional seasonal musical wish was:

“Das alte Jahr verflossen ist	The old year has passed
So danken wir Herr Jesus Christ	We thank our Lord Jesus Christ.
So danken wir Herr Jesus Christ.	

Das Neue Jahr mit Freud und Leid	The New Year, with its joys and sorrows
Mach unser Sinn and Herz bereit.	Prepare us in mind and heart.
Mach unser Sinn und Herz bereit.	

Adults would wish greetings with the saying:

“Wir wünschen euch ein Neues Jahr	We wish you a New Year Health, a
Gesundheit, langes Leben	long life Peace and harmony. Upon
Friede und Einigkeit.	your death eternal bliss.
Nach eierem Tot die ewige Glückseligkeit”.	

Children would visit their godparents, uncles and aunts with the whimsical saying:

“Ich wünsch, ich wünsch	I wish, I wish I don't know what.
Ich weiß nicht was.	Reach in your pocket And give me
Langt in die Tasch	something.
Und gibt mir was.”	

The young men of Colelia would go to the home of their sweethearts, equipped with a gun. Arriving at the home, the suitor would announce his presence with a shot. He and his companions were invited into the home, wish everyone a Happy New Year and would be offered a drink and some food, usually “Kuchen” (a pizza-like cake with a topping of cream sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon).